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Word and Image in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*

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Word and Image in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*

Introduction

Originally written in 1859, and published in 1862, Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* has sparked a variety of critical readings in addition to numerous artistic interpretations over a 150-year history. More importantly, each edition of *Goblin Market* reflects Rossetti's belief in and commitment to the Pre-Raphaelite tradition of collaboration between word and image. Beginning with the first frontispiece and title page designed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina's brother, a Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) influence over Christina has presided over all subsequent editions of Rossetti's most famous poem. Various artistic interpretations of *Goblin Market* followed Dante Gabriel's depictions in later years, shifting the categorization of *Goblin Market* as an adult poem to a children's fairy story to an adult erotic fantasy.

In 1893, Laurence Housman produced a fully illustrated version of *Goblin Market*, which reflects a PRB influence of religion and nature. Then in 1933, *Goblin Market* became a bona fide children's book with fairy tale illustrator Arthur Rackham's colorful visions. The watercolors adorning Rackham's pages spoke not only to children but to adult collectors as well. In 1970, Ellen Raskin designed and edited a version of *Goblin Market* strictly for a child audience, with colorful, swirling illustrations and harmless-looking goblins, and removed elements that could be considered frightening. Only three years later *Playboy* took hold of *Goblin Market* and recruited fantasy artist Kinuko Craft to create accompanying illustrations for their erotic fantasy version of Rossetti's poem. Craft's images are highly explicit in nature, targeting the sexual symbolism found throughout the poem. Almost ten years later, in 1984, John Bolton designed his own version of *Goblin Market* for *Pacific Comics*, an adult collector's comic book company. Like Craft's images, Bolton's are sexually explicit, though not quite to the same degree as Craft's. Finally, in 2012, artist Rebecca Fox

exemplifies the influence *Goblin Market* continues to exert over artists in the twenty-first century. Each scene selected by artists for interpretation is seen time and again throughout *Goblin Market*'s history, demonstrating how one influential scene taken from Rossetti's poem can affect hundreds of year's worth of art. These illustrations reflect the religious and sexual imagery found in *Goblin Market*'s language and clearly demonstrate a true union of word and image.

The words of Rossetti's poems have led to critical interpretations of religious fervor, repressed sexual desire, the PRB's artistic explorations, the Victorian marketplace, and economics. Whatever the critical reading of *Goblin Market*, it is inexorably linked to either religion or sexuality. The analysis of *Goblin Market* as a religious allegory explores the dichotomy of saint and sinner, alongside Eucharistic readings and Rossetti's Anglo-Catholic beliefs. Allegorizing the poem as a sexual experience is influenced by Christina's sexually repressed life, as well as *Goblin Market*'s scenes rampant with sensuous, erotic language that turns goblin men into bullies and rapists, and the sisters, Lizzie and Laura, into lesbians and tainted brides. *Goblin Market* is not just a poem about religion or sex, nor is it a straightforward children's tale, as early- and mid-twentieth century illustrative history would suggest; however, one element dominates all readings of *Goblin Market*: the relationship of word and image, or the verbal-visual aesthetic.

The verbal-visual aesthetic of Rossetti's *Goblin Market* is traced here. Chapter one briefly discusses the life of Christina Rossetti, showing how her experiences are attributed to her poetic works. The chapter not only acts as biography to Rossetti, but to *Goblin Market* as well, tracking the poem's publication history, highlighting artworks inspired by and produced for the poem. Chapter two explores the religious influence within *Goblin Market*, showing how the poem is both a Eucharistic and Christ-like allegory, which is deeply rooted in Christina's religious life and beliefs. In chapter three, language and imagery are explored,

reflecting how and why the sexual suggestiveness of *Goblin Market* is a major theme of scholarly debate. Chapter four focuses on selective works by the seven artists discussed above and are analyzed based on the divine and secular readings of the poem discussed in chapters two and three. Though the verbal-visual aesthetic was begun under the influence of the PRB, which focused more on the *visual* than the *verbal*, Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* took the idea to a new level, making it last for generation after generation of writers and artists.

Chapter One

Influences of Word and Image: Christina Rossetti and *Goblin Market*

Christina Rossetti was born on December 5, 1830, to Gabriele and Frances Rossetti. Growing up, Christina was surrounded by religion. Her mother was a Protestant but Christina's father was "a lapsed Catholic" who did not believe in the ritualism of the Catholic Church. Christina, Frances, and Maria, Christina's sister, were drawn to the Oxford Movement, which viewed Anglicanism "as a true branch of the Holy Catholic Church" (Jones 1-4)—hence the term Anglo-Catholic. By the time Christina was thirteen, the Rossetti women regularly attended Christ Church on Albany Street, which was a popular place of worship for those embroiled in the Oxford Movement (18). The Oxford Movement, also called Tractarianism, created and relished devotional poetry that "required its readers to meditate on the literal and symbolic meanings contained in the words, their scriptural allusions, anagogic or spiritual import and hidden truths" (Kooistra, "Christina Rossetti" 167). This process of finding "symbolic meanings" and discovering "hidden truths" deeply influenced Christina's poetry. In addition to her spiritual education as a child, Christina's mother oversaw her general education at home. Christina's love for her mother and, indeed, her devotion to her, drove Christina to be more like Frances, and in so doing Christina purposefully suppressed her "passionate" feelings and chose "to live a life of self-sacrifice and repression" (Jones 9, 143). However, biographers sometimes reserve Christina's self-inflicting martyrdom as myth shadowing the truth of Rossetti's personal life.

While Christina grew up in a deeply religious household, the family was also brimming with artistic talent. Her older brother, Dante Gabriel, was a famed artist of the PRB, which he helped to establish. Because of the PRB there emerged "a budding age of aestheticism, of art for art's sake, with a common interest in art which was unashamedly about the senses, surface and texture" (Graham 41). The Brothers believed in combining

images and words to express art (36). This idea of combining word and image fascinated Christina, in addition to her deep appreciation for the Tractarian ““sacramental aesthetic”” developed by John Ruskin, which was “resplendent with symbolic truth and spiritual meaning” (Kooistra, *Illustration* 5). Her faith in the Scripture and Tractarian devotional writings was firmly established by her participation in the PRB, which valued both nature and God (Kooistra, “Christina Rossetti” 166). Through the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Tractarians, Christina’s visual imagination was formed. Christina learned the key to the verbal-visual aesthetic through her practice of singsong rhyme and meter, or lack thereof, and her general ability to paint a picture with sensuous and devotional words (Kooistra, *Illustration* 4; “Christina Rossetti” 166). Many readers of the nineteenth century believed her to be *the* religious poet of her time, as well as “a poet’s poet, an artist devoted to the art” (Peterson 422). Christina’s devotion to the verbal-visual aesthetic is reflective of the PBR’s dedication to art for art’s sake. Much like the Tractarian poetry she frequently read, Christina wanted her readers to use both word and picture to interpret and decipher her verses’ true meanings (Kooistra, “Christina Rossetti” 168).

Rossetti’s steadfast faith strengthened her during difficult times in her personal life, including her failed engagements and the constant illnesses that haunted her through youth and adulthood. Many critics believe it likely that Christina’s health crisis began about the time she started her menstruations. During a period when talk about sex was taboo among the “respectable classes” it would have been difficult for Christina to deal with this part of her life, especially surrounded by male doctors constantly examining her while trying to determine the cause or causes of her “illnesses.” It is easy to understand that “her views on sexuality, gender relations, and marriage ... and her theological values and religious activities” were influenced by her illnesses and the struggles she had with them throughout her lifetime. Doctors diagnosed Christina with “hysteria,” which then transformed into

depression after puberty (Harrison 422, 423). The Victorians believed hysteria was an illness associated with the womb—as was, ironically enough, the flow of literature from women—and “was partly psychosomatic—a physical manifestation of an emotional and nervous disorder” (Jones 19). Many doctors believed that a female who was socially repressed was in danger of hysteria, and also that hysteria was common amongst adolescent females going through puberty and had no “outlet” for their sexual development (20).

In addition to hysteria and depression, Christina was diagnosed with Grave’s Disease in 1871, which is an illness that causes the thyroid gland to overwork. She had a visible lump on her throat and often could not eat because swallowing caused too much pain. Twenty years later in 1891, Rossetti was diagnosed with breast cancer, and doctors operated in May of that year. However, two years later, the cancer came back, and it was a year later that Christina Rossetti died (Jones 154, 218, 220, 224). Edmund Gosse, one of Christina’s contemporary biographers and critics, dubbed the poet the High-Priestess of Pre-Raphaelitism and eloquently wrote upon her death: “after prolonged sufferings borne with infinite patience, this great writer, who was also a great saint, passed into the region of her own visions” (158, 162). Gosse said in just a few words what a biographer of Christina Rossetti struggles to say in an entire book. Christina was patient, perhaps to a fault; a devout Christian, sister, and daughter; a talented writer with a fantastic imagination; and a woman who blurred the lines between nature, God, sex, religion, desire, and devotion through one of her greatest and most read works: *Goblin Market*.

Since its original publication in 1862, *Goblin Market* has evolved from a poem written and published with adults in mind, has crossed over into the children’s literature market with the inclusion of colorful illustrations in the early-1930s, and then inevitably reverted back to an adult market in the arenas of scholarship—where the poem has been read and studied seriously (Kooistra, “Modern Markets” 262)—and adult erotic fantasy in the

mid- to late-1900s. The poem's diverseness comes from its symbolic content, its singsong rhyme and meter, its imaginative setting, and the sensuous words that paint a picture in the mind of the reader—a picture that would eventually be put to canvas. It is here that the verbal-visual aesthetic, the symbiotic relationship between word and image, takes shape.

Christina's poetry written between 1856 and 1862, are, in biographer Kathryn Jones's opinion, "much of her best." The confidence Christina had in her style is evident during this period, having developed it since her childhood book of poetry entitled *Verses* (73). "The earliest verses," explains Edmund Gosse, "show us merely the child's desire for expression in verse, for experiment in rhyme and meter. Gradually we see the buddings of an individual manner ... we find the poet assuming something of her adult manner" (142). Gosse points to Christina's "The Dead City," which was published by her grandfather in 1847 as a part of *Verses*, as the beginnings of the future *Goblin Market*:

In green emerald baskets were
Sun-red apples, streaked and fair;
Here the nectarine and peach
And ripe plum lay, and on each
The bloom rested every where.

Grapes were hanging overhead,
Purple, pale, and ruby-red;
And in panniers all around
Yellow melons shone, fresh found
With the dew upon them spread. (181-190)

In these lines we see a young Christina experimenting with colorful lines of rhyme and meter, along with a list of sumptuous fruits, the very things that make *Goblin Market* memorable.

Originally entitled "A Peep at the Goblins," and changed by Dante Gabriel for publication, *Goblin Market* was Christina's first poem to bring her any kind of significant recognition within literary circles (Jones 99). The uniqueness of Rossetti's poem—the rhyme and meter, the colorful lists, and the many possibilities of meaning—often causes readers to wonder if there was an inspiration for *Goblin Market*. Most likely, several elements of

Christina's life influenced the moral of the tale, though one possibility could be related to Christina's time as a volunteer at St. Mary Magdalene's Home for fallen women in Highgate. Jan Marsh and Lorraine Kooistra cite Rossetti's time at Highgate as starting in 1859, the same year Rossetti wrote *Goblin Market*—the poem is dated April of 1859—and possibly ending around 1864 (238-9; "Cross-Audienced" 184). Marsh believes that Christina was not inspired to write the poem based on the *women* at Highgate, but rather "the *challenge* of working there," and that *Goblin Market* was started and finished during this period of time (244, emphasis mine). However, this argument is purely speculative. There is no evidence of when Christina *began* to write *Goblin Market*, only when she *finished* the poem. Rossetti may have started the poem several months or even years before her time spent at Highgate. The correlation between time and place does not mean the poem was solely influenced by her work there. It is more likely that Rossetti began the poem earlier and spent time refining it, which is acceptable based on the length of the piece. In addition, Diane D'Amico cites Rossetti's work at Highgate as beginning in 1860, not 1859 (67). That is not to say that Rossetti's work there did not inspire her to refine the poem, however, there is no evidence to support this one way or the other.

While Christina was not a trained artist like Dante Gabriel, she often sketched or painted watercolors in the margins of her books. In her own copy of *Goblin Market*, Christina painted thirty-five watercolor pictures. This indicates "her personal commitment to, and interest in, complementing poetic language with visual imagery in order to develop wider symbolic meaning" (Kooistra, *Illustration* 40). Because of her rudimentary art skills, Rossetti knew her illustrations were not good enough to be published, and "willingly subjected her verses to creative interpretation" from Dante Gabriel (43). Because of her admiration for the verbal-visual aesthetic, Christina knew that images created by her brother would "make her poetry immediately eye-catching and visually pleasurable," as well as increase the

possibilities of being published (45). As figurehead for the PRB, Dante Gabriel and his reputation demanded a certain reverence that would favor his sister's publication endeavors. Kooistra says that Dante Gabriel's illustrations for his sister's poem demonstrate he was an "astute reader" of her poetry. However, he, like all readers of poetry and prose, brought his own interpretation of Christina's words to the table, which would potentially influence the poem's readers (82). The influence of Pre-Raphaelitism is clearly displayed in Dante Gabriel's frontispiece and title page for *Goblin Market* and thus reflects the PRB's belief in word and image collaboration, and in this case, sister-brother collaboration.

The publication of *Goblin Market* fell into the hands of Arthur Macmillan who first received the poem from Dante Gabriel. Macmillan immediately liked the poem and sought to put together a collection of Christina's work to print. There was cause for illustrated books of poetry, called gift books, during the Christmas season and Macmillan envisioned *Goblin Market and Other Poems* would be released to coincide with the 1861 holiday season. However, because of Dante Gabriel's well-documented procrastination and Christina's insistence that her brother's drawings were essential and the book of poems could not be published without them, Macmillan lost out on the holiday sales, as the book was not published until March the following year (Kooistra, *Illustration* 63).

In the early-1890s, Laurence Housman, a student and revivalist of the PRB movement thirty years after the society's prime, wrote to Macmillan with the proposition of producing a fully illustrated, stand-alone version of *Goblin Market*. Both Housman and Macmillan saw the financial opportunity of Christmas gift book sales. However, both men needed Rossetti's permission. Like Dante Gabriel, Housman had his own ideas of how *Goblin Market* should be illustrated, and sent his proposed artworks to Christina, who did not favor Housman with a positive response. She felt his interpretation of the goblins—men "wearing animal masks in order to hide the wickedness that their own faces would reveal"—was contrary to what she

had written and urged Housman to draw his goblins closer to how Dante Gabriel had drawn them—even though the poem does not clearly state whether or not the goblins are in fact men or animals. This Housman did, and finally received the go-ahead from the author. “What Christina really objected to ... was not so much [the goblins’] ugliness as their failure to conform to the visualization of the poem that had developed out of the original collaborative bookmaking process” (Kooistra, *Illustration* 84-6). In other words, Housman’s sketches dismissed the original collaboration of word and image between the Rossetti siblings.

The Copyright Act of 1842 allowed authors to retain the rights to their works for forty-one years during their lives and for seven years after their deaths (Jones 190). It was after Christina’s death, and the seven-year patent right expired, that authors and illustrators, often acting as editors, began to take *Goblin Market* and mold it into a book for children. However, the first true appearance of *Goblin Market* as a “children’s” book was in school textbooks published in the late-1800s, during Christina’s lifetime, and the early-1900s. As part of a school textbook, *Goblin Market* would have been read by both student and teacher, and was published for particular age groups—generally girls between the ages of eleven and fifteen, the time in a young girl’s life at which puberty begins (Kooistra, “Cross-Audienced” 185, 187). What the schoolbook anthologies lacked compared to the children’s gift book of the early twentieth century were illustrations, and it was these illustrations that moved *Goblin Market* into a permanent place on the nursery room bookshelf.

With the nineteenth century came the idea that childhood was “a separate stage of life” determined by age and gender, as was demonstrated when *Goblin Market* became a poem for pubescent schoolgirls. At the same time, advances in printing technology allowed for multiple prints with designs, at first black and white and then color, that were specifically designated as “children’s books.” In the early twentieth century, the connection between juvenile literature and picture books solidified, creating an entirely separate division in the

world of book publishing. Illustrations were no longer immediately associated with adult texts, but the challenge illustrators and publishers faced was to create a book that was pleasing to the eye for both children and adults, for while children were the target audience, it was adults who sought the books out and paid for them (Kooistra, *Illustration* 190-191).

While Christina Rossetti may have produced some juvenile writings later in her life, like *Speaking Likenesses*, she was not a children's book author to begin with, nor was *Goblin Market* intended for a young audience (Kooistra, *Illustration* 193). Despite the fact that *Goblin Market* never achieved the almost cult-like status of *Alice in Wonderland*, which was published only three years after Rossetti's debut collection of poems, *Goblin Market* "inspired six newly illustrated editions in the first three decades of the [twentieth] century" (Kooistra, "Cross-Audience" 188). The most famous of these illustrated children's books is Arthur Rackham's *Goblin Market* published in 1933. Rackham's version not only secured Rossetti's poem as a children's book for the twentieth century but also cemented the inaccurate association of *Goblin Market* as a Victorian children's book (Kooistra, *Illustration* 207). Perhaps this was because Rackham was born in the Victorian era and started his career as an illustrator in 1893 (Martineau 60). Rackham's popularity grew in the very early-1900s, when he began illustrating reprints of famous stories for the gift book market. In 1908, Rackham illustrated *Rip Van Winkle* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which displayed his adeptness at painting "witches, gnomes, fairies, and anthropomorphized trees [bringing] them to a pitch of vivid characterization, sometimes with an unsettling frisson of horror" (Hamilton). Because of Rackham's penchant for the "fanciful" and "grotesque", which are visible in *Goblin Market*, and his famous depictions of fairy stories for children, he made Rossetti's poem "a child-specific" fairytale for decades. Coincidentally, Rackham's "children's" illustrations led to *Goblin Market*'s resurgence in the adult market, influencing

artwork made for an adult audience indulging erotic fantasy stories (Kooistra, “Modern Markets” 257).

Throughout *Goblin Market*’s publication history, the “children’s fairy tale has remained open to dual readerships” of children and adults; however, it is through the relationship of word and image that the line between the two audiences has been drawn. Talk of sex is generally off-limits in terms of children’s literature because children are deemed unable to comprehend the topic. “Sexuality ... has always been a more or less taboo area in the realm of representation for children. But notions of what is sexy are both historically contingent and subject to the different restrictions of verbal and visual media” (Kooistra, “Cross-Audience” 182-3). The unknown and unexplainable has influenced the adult and children’s media markets for the last two centuries. The mystery of the mystical and the mythical appeals to a wide range of audiences and includes media such as fantasy and graphic novels, as well as computer and board games like *Dungeons and Dragons*. Adult fantasy novels, comics, magazines, and other print media rely on the verbal-visual aesthetic to entice their readers (192). This was also true for Christina Rossetti when she originally sought to publish *Goblin Market*, and the collaboration between word and image proved just as important then as it did in the mid-twentieth century.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Christina Rossetti started to re-attract interest amongst scholars, especially those who were re-examining the Victorian social climate as a highly “sexually charged historical moment” (Kooistra, “Cross-Audience” 190). Yet in 1970, during the midst of the Rossetti resurgence, Ellen Raskin edited and illustrated a version of *Goblin Market* specifically for children with techno, rainbow-like colors, and drew the goblins as squat little men and animals in outlandish servants’ liveries. Raskin also deleted any lines associated with or suggestive of death and sex (Kooistra, *Illustration* 204-5). Scholarship may have pointed adults to the more suggestive imagery of *Goblin Market*, but

there were obviously some authors who held on to the fairytale ideal that is the basis of *Goblin Market*.

Three years later, *Playboy* produced “a new, sexy, Christina for a middle-class audience of ... men who liked their erotica laced with a certain amount of cultural erudition” (Kooistra, *Illustration* 240-1). The 1973, special “Ribald Classics” edition of *Playboy*, “deliberately presents *Goblin Market* as children’s literature in order to make [it] ... especially provocative.” The editor describes *Goblin Market* to readers as a poem that “the kids have been reading for the past 114 years,” and encourages the largely male readership to enjoy the pleasures hidden within the poem’s seemingly child-like lines (Kooistra, “Cross-Audience” 194). To further promote the explicit, sexually arousing language of the poem, *Playboy* recruited Kinuko Craft to elaborate on the subtle eroticism in *Goblin Market*. Craft is best known for her fantasy paintings, popularized through fantasy book covers for authors like Stephen King, and opera posters and magazines, such as *Times* and *New York Magazine*. Beginning in the 1990s, Craft turned her attention to illustrating children’s fairytale books like *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* (“Kinuko Y Craft Biography”). Craft’s career as an artist closely resembles Rackham’s: both artists transitioned from magazine illustrations for adults to children’s illustrations of collectable fairytales. In addition, Craft’s artworks depicting *Goblin Market* are influenced by Rackham’s illustrations. Though unlike Rackham’s gift book, Craft’s stunningly explicit illustrations highlight scenes from *Goblin Market* that speak of orgies, rape, and female homoeroticism (Kooistra, *Illustration* 242).

In 1984, *Pacific Comics* released their first *Pathways to Fantasy* issue, where John Bolton illustrated a version of *Goblin Market* for an audience of adult comic collectors. Like a children’s book, an adult comic version of *Goblin Market* needed colored illustrations to appeal to the target audience. However, unlike their counterparts, adult comics do not worry about suppressing “sex, death, and violence” (Kooistra, *Illustration* 244). Just as *Playboy*’s

version of Rossetti's poem, the subject matter of Bolton's designs was tailored to a mature audience. Illustrator John Bolton, who is "[a] specialist in the fantasy and erotic horror genre," created a colorful visual and verbal representation meant to appeal to collectors, much like Rackham's gift book (196).

In the twenty-first century, there have been fewer illustrated productions of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*. Reproductions are usually paperback editions featuring Rackham's picture of "White and golden Lizzie stood" on the cover. There are collector's editions, however, combining the illustrations of Rossetti, Housman, and Rackham—like Chronicle Books' *Goblin Market: a tale of two sisters*—or there are scholarly editions of *Goblin Market* in anthologies—like Oxford World's Classics' *Poems and Prose* by Christina Rossetti—that hold no illustrations. In 2003, The Folio Society published a collector's edition entitled *Goblin Market and Selected Poems*, with illustrations by Jillian Tamaki. There are also artists who have been inspired by Rossetti's poem and produced standalone works, for example, London-based artist Rebecca Fox. The artwork she has created from the lines of *Goblin Market* fits nicely into the same category as Craft and Bolton. In addition, Fox created a comic based on her original artworks to join the word and image of Christina Rossetti. Here is found yet another example of the Pre-Raphaelite verbal-visual aesthetic, and Fox even cites the PBR as an influence.

Unlike the simplistic world of Victorian publishing, there are publishing categories today that go beyond "children's books" and "adult books." According to the publishing industry, before reaching the "adult" category there are now three categories of "childhood" to pass through: child, middle grade, and young adult. The "child" category focuses on anything a parent would read to their infant to something a six year old might find entertaining. The "middle grade" category encompasses eight year olds to twelve year olds, while the category of "young adult" literature includes ages just at or beyond puberty, about

fourteen, and extends into adulthood (Malk). There is often crossover from the young adult into the adult markets because of this broad age grouping.

In terms of *Goblin Market* being a cross-over poem, Kooistra identifies the crux: whenever Christina's poem is adapted for children it is often edited, re-written into prose, shortened—most likely for the short attention span of young children—re-titled, and accompanied by colorful illustrations to draw in the reader/listener. This format of picture and text for children became a new standard for the reproduction of Christina's poetry (*Illustration* 193). Indeed, comic book reproductions of *Goblin Market* were also edited to suit the flow of images and guide the reader on a roller-coaster-like adventure. "In thinking of *Goblin Market* as a children's fairy tale and an erotic adult fantasy ... it is important to keep the boundaries fluid rather than distinct" (Kooistra, "Cross-Audienced" 198-9). These boundaries between child and adult are now indistinct because they are influenced so much by how contemporary society views the two groups separately and in relation to one another. This is then strengthened by the illustrations presented alongside the poem, changing how readers see *Goblin Market* by pre-emptively drawing their attention to aspects of the poem that may otherwise have gone unnoticed. Interpretation through word and image is once again mirrored in Rossetti's sexual and Eucharistic scenes, driving a reader towards a foregone conclusion.

Chapter Two

Sacramental Imagery and Erotic Words: Reading *Goblin Market* as Sensual Eucharist

More often than not, *Goblin Market* is cited as a religious allegory with a moral tale closely related to the temptation-fall-redemption narrative. Laura's temptation to try the goblin fruit leads to her "fall" from innocence and youth, and she withers away pining after the fruits and goblins she can no longer find. Once Laura has had a taste of "knowledge," like Eve, she wants more. Lizzie is often identified as a Christ-like figure that patiently endures the brutal verbal and physical attacks of the goblins in order to attain the fruit-antidote Laura needs to restore her health and virtue. In a symbolically Eucharistic act, Lizzie encourages Laura to "eat" her and "drink" her, also an extremely erotic act, which is the only way Laura can ingest the antidote that will redeem her.

In the language and imagery of *Goblin Market* there is a "sensuousness of natural details" that evidence Tractarian and Pre-Raphaelite influences of "'visual abundance' and indefinite meaning", which "deliberately encourages ongoing looking, thinking, and interpretation" on the part of the reader. *Goblin Market*'s "deceptively simple surface overlays a complex symbolism that works by the accretion of detail and allusion within a form that is itself symbolic" (Kooistra, "Christina Rossetti" 170). Rossetti uses the emblem tradition—a symbiotic relationship between the body and spirit, representing image and word, respectively—to represent the verbal-visual aesthetic in her poetry and to draw the reader's attention to the different layers of symbols within her poem. This is something that both the Pre-Raphaelites and the Tractarians practiced in their arts "so that physical or literal facts revealed spiritual or symbolic meanings" (166).

Goblin Market is also firmly centered on religious allegory through the Tractarian understanding of symbols, which influenced Rossetti. "For Rossetti, the profoundly spiritual possibilities of symbolism in poetry and nature are enabled by the descendent motion of a

God who makes Himself available to humankind, especially through that central Christian event, the incarnation” (Arseneau 79-81). Here we can pick out the importance of the Eucharist in Tractarian thought and Rossetti’s poem, but there is another element concerned in Rossetti’s imagery that is just as important to her and her theology: the natural world. This imagery of the natural world is replete throughout *Goblin Market* and is described as hills, glens, streams, plants, and fruits, all of which are extremely visible in artistic interpretations—Laura and Lizzie are typically drawn outside. However, the natural world presents a kind of uneasiness for Christina because of its “material and sensory” temptations (82). While the Pre-Raphaelites honored nature, the Tractarians found nature to be distracting from morality (D’Amico and Kent 96). Through her poetry, Rossetti attempted to rectify her love of nature and her own religious moral canon, for she felt that love of nature and “reveling” in it “could confuse moral judgment” and in so doing risk salvation (Grass 361). These sensory distractions are rampant in *Goblin Market* with the abundant fruit and nature surrounding Laura and Lizzie, and must be examined in order to understand how the natural world distracts a person from a union with God. “The profusion of enticing fruits with which the poem opens ... speaks immediately to ... a paradigm of temptation” (Hill 458). The continuous listing of fruits leaves the senses dazed and confused, overwhelmed by the sheer number and exotic variety, which in turn challenges one’s ability to make morally sound judgment (Grass 362). The listing of twenty-nine fruits begins with the apple, and while the other fruits may represent confusion and distraction from morality, the fact that Rossetti begins the list with an apple sets up the paradigm of temptation, or of Eve’s fall from Paradise. This is something Ellen Raskin may have deciphered, since her Laura is seen eating an apple after paying the goblins with her golden hair (See Figure 6, ch. 4). Marylu Hill also notes that the fruits the goblins sell are seemingly harmless in their perfect ripeness, but “there is something unnatural and sinister about them” (460). Kooistra agrees: “This confused

cornucopia of fruit from every corner of the globe ... in one place and time, is clearly not natural and seems potentially dangerous” (“Christina Rossetti” 86). Arseneau also believes that the fruit seems unnatural, as well as “illusory, and deceptive ... [in] the satisfaction it offers” (86). The “deceptive” fruit reflects the wickedness and unnaturalness of the goblin men themselves, as well as the surrounding glen, which is the only location the mysterious goblins can be found.

It is necessary to establish a timeline for pattern of temptation, fall, and redemption within the poem to better understand how *Goblin Market* reflects the Eucharist as seen through the erotic nature of the poem’s imagery. The timeline of the poem is most often featured in illustrated editions of the poem, as will be shown in chapter four. First, Laura is tempted by the goblins selling their fruit, who tell her to “[t]aste them and try” (ll. 25) and buy from them with a lock of her golden hair. Like Eve, who by eating the fruit of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge and doomed the world of man, Laura succumbs to curiosity and temptation and partakes of the goblin fruit, thus enabling her own kind of fall (Battiscombe 107). The goblin fruit is described as forbidden in the poem, and Lizzie warns Laura of the goblin *men* and how “[t]heir evil gifts would harm [them]” (l. 65). This argues that the promises of men are the same as the serpent’s tongue in Eve’s ear: evil and hollow.

Laura’s exchange of femininity for the fruit is read as a “sexual experience before marriage” based on the warning Lizzie gives and the actions Laura takes in spite of her sister’s sound advice (Duffy 289). The sinful act that Laura metaphorically commits would turn her into what Victorian society considered a “fallen” woman. “[Women] did not have to be the ‘vilest of her sex’ [a prostitute] to be considered fallen. She need only have had sexual intercourse outside of marriage” (D’Amico 69). Based on the theory that Christina’s time at St. Mary Magdalene’s influenced her poem, it is possible she saw the despicable state of these women and used them as an example for Laura. At Highgate it was believed a woman

who had fallen could only be saved by a “sister,” i.e. a fellow female, who was pure and untainted (D’Amico 71). The difference between Laura and Lizzie, the “tainted” and the “pure,” respectively, reflects the untainted women who helped the fallen ones regain a respectable place in the world. As a warning, Lizzie recants the story of Jeanie, a fallen women who was not saved, in order to remind Laura of the dangers of interacting with the goblin men:

Do you not remember Jeanie,
 How she met them in the moonlight,
 Took their gifts both choice and many,
 Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
 Plucked from bowers
 Where summer ripens at all hours?
 But ever in the noonlight
 She pined and pined away;
 Sought them by night and day,
 Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
 Then fell with the first snow,
 While to this day no grass will grow
 Where she lies low:

 You should not loiter so. (ll. 147-159, 162)

After consuming the goblins’ fruits, like Jeanie, Laura cannot fight the urge to eat more. She “long[s] for the night” (l. 214), as did Jeanie, when she will once again be able to hear the cries of the goblins and find them. However, she cannot hear the goblins’ cries of, “‘Come buy, come buy,’ / With its iterated jingle / Of sugar baited words” (l. 232-4), for once a girl has partaken of the goblin’s fruits, their magic is lost to her and she cannot find them again. Laura becomes lost in daydreams, ceases doing her chores, and languishes about, becoming idle (Grass 371). Idleness, of course, is another kind of sin all on its own. Yet Laura “appears as a victim not only of her own weak nature but also of male deception”. The goblins are the “destroyers of female innocence” when they lead Jeanie and Laura to their moral demise (D’Amico 74). This tale is a warning to women who (sinfully) mix with (goblin) men, and

yet the moral is delivered *after* Laura has already consumed the fruits. Therefore, the story is actually a foreshadowing of events to come rather than a cautionary tale.

The second scene occurs in the shadow of the erotic body, i.e. the Christ-like sacrifice of Lizzie. Laura is seemingly “at Death’s door”, so Lizzie decides to “listen and look” for the goblin men “for the first time in her life” (ll. 321, 328, 327). Lizzie subjects herself to the physical and spiritual abuse of the goblins in order to retrieve the “fiery antidote” (l. 559), or the fruits’ juices and pulp required to save Laura, whose “misplaced desire” has led to her swift degeneration of body and soul (Hill 462). “Rossetti’s use of the term antidote and her emphasis on the transformative power of Lizzie’s sacrifice replicate accurately an image that is central to Eucharist doctrine, and one which the Tractarians found particularly compelling to explain the ‘realness’ of the Eucharistic actions of eating and drinking” (463).

The goblins start out being friendly towards Lizzie, hoping that she too will indulge in their fruits, but when she attempts to give them a silver penny instead and insists she take the fruit away with her, the goblin men grow angry and begin their assault:

Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat. (ll. 398-407)

Throughout her violent encounter with the goblins, Lizzie resolutely stands against the onslaught, keeps her lips shut tight so as not to ingest the poisonous fruits, and discovers “that the seductive beauty of nature’s variety is neither good nor evil in itself but instead has the ability to produce either good or evil results, depending upon” the moral and spiritual intentions of the person themselves (Grass 374). Lizzie is a moral “beacon ... shedding a Christian light through the chaos of nature so that others—especially Laura—may find the

moral grounding and direction they require” (367). Though Lizzie and Laura are mirror images of each other physically—“Golden head by golden head” (l. 184)—their differences lie in their moral behavior. Laura seeks to satisfy her own physical curiosity and craving, while Lizzie’s actions are strictly in the service of another. “Her patient endurance of the violent treatment she receives at the hands of the goblin men is Christ-like” (Arseneau 89). Indeed, Lizzie does not fight back or scream, as is seen depicted in several artists’ interpretations, such as Housman’s and Bolton’s, but she stands firm and unwavering, as did Christ, taking the punishment she does not deserve all in an effort to save someone she loves.

According to Arseneau, the pulp and juice that Lizzie comes away with are “less important than Lizzie’s Eucharistic offering of herself” (90). Laura’s consumption of Lizzie mirrors Christ’s offering to “redeem the fallen” and the ingestion of the fruit juice purifies Laura and restores her ability to define right from wrong (Arseneau 90). The Eucharist is described as a “sacrifice and saving meal” using “the erotic body as the vehicle for salvation—an image that is at once profoundly spiritual and profoundly erotic” (Hill 455). The concept of the body as a vehicle for salvation must be understood in terms of Anglo-Catholic doctrine—for one drinks the blood of Christ and eats his body when receiving Communion—since Christina was a devout Tractarian. Hill believes that Rossetti uses the body—the body of Lizzie—as a “conduit through which humans understand God” because it is only in this way that humans can experience the divine (456). This too is the only way Laura can be saved from the negative effects of the goblin fruit, which she consumed in a moment of weakness caused by curiosity, innocence of the world, and temptation. This leads into the third scene: redemption.

The sensual language and imagery is undeniable in this scene. Lizzie offers up her body to Laura, saying, “Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices ... Eat me, drink me, love me” (ll. 468, 471). It is in this scene of sexually charged imagery that “the controversial issue of the

erotic body in the poem and in Eucharist theology in general” is most evident (Hill 464). The “love feast” that Laura engages in upon Lizzie’s body has been said to reflect “Rossetti’s repressed sexuality, while others assert that it should be read only symbolically and as an emblem of a purely spiritual rather than physical encounter” (464). The imagery while erotic is also Christ-like since Lizzie offers up her body to save her sister, just as Christ offered his body for the salvation of humankind. It is also Eucharist-like since the penitent Laura must eat and drink of Lizzie’s body to be saved. The imagery suggests “that we need to re-conceive the erotic as something that utilizes the body and its sensations of desire and delight as the proper vessel through which humans experience spiritual union with Christ.... At once explicit and innocent in her tone, Lizzie boldly offers salvation mixed with pleasure through the vessel of her body” (465). Also, keeping with a religious tone of interpretation, Lizzie and Laura may be seen to represent the dichotomy between saint and sinner as well as Mary and Eve. Mary, like Lizzie, “through the Incarnation, rectifies Eve’s misunderstanding of the serpent’s words” in Eden (Ready 170). It is through Lizzie’s acts, as Mary figure, that Laura, as deceived Eve figure, is redeemed.

Both the moral tale of temptation-fall-redemption portrayed within the poem and the Eucharistic symbolism of Lizzie’s Christ-like sacrifice are strengthened by the two-sidedness of the goblin fruit and the two-sided method of delivery (Humphries 394). Humphries suggests *Goblin Market* is “structured upon theological contradiction” and points to the two-sided nature of the goblin fruit, both as degenerative and restorative—the fruit that made Laura ill later cures her—and the duality of the of the Holy Communion as cited in the Book of Common Prayer, Church of England (391-2). The Holy Communion can bring life or death, and the Prayer Book warns against people receiving it unless they have repented their sins and are spiritually prepared. On the other hand, the Tractarians sought to strengthen the importance of Communion and to discourage the fear prompted by the Book of Common

Prayer, endorsing the benefits of Communion “when consumed correctly” (398). When Laura consumed the fruits it was in haste and greed, but when Lizzie braves the goblins and returns with the juice of the fruits upon her body, the formerly dangerous death-giving fruit now becomes restorative and life giving like the Eucharist (394). The juices on Lizzie’s body no longer belong to the goblins and their fruits. They have become part of her body and she urges Laura to take “*my* juices” (l.468, emphasis mine) to cure her.

In the final scene after experiencing redemption, Laura, who is now married, as well as Lizzie, gathers the children around her—whether it is just her children she summons or Lizzie’s too is unclear—and tells them the story of

The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,
 Their fruits like honey to the throat
 But poison in the blood;

 Would tell them how her sister stood
 In deadly peril to do her good,

 “For there is no friend like a sister
 In calm or stormy weather

 To lift one if one totters down,
 To strengthen whilst one stands.” (ll. 552-5, 557-8, 562-3, 566-7)

This scene displays “a return to patriarchal order.... [I]t presents an idea that a woman can save her sister, but cannot change the very systems that endanger women as a whole” (Welter 141-2). This then contradicts the idea that Lizzie and Laura are safe from men, when really they have been at the mercy of males all their lives. Some readers find the ending of *Goblin Market* to be anti-climactic after the roller-coaster ride of vividly sensual and religious imagery. “Perhaps ... Christina Rossetti ... thought some drop in tension was advisable before return to everyday life; or perhaps [she] feared that, left to ourselves, our sympathies would be with the reprehensible Laura ... rather than the virtuous but slightly boring Lizzie” (Battiscombe 105). More importantly, and probably closer to the truth, the closing lines had a weightier significance to Rossetti. The poem is dedicated to her sister, Maria, and this show

of sisterly love parallels the love and affection between Lizzie and Laura (Jones 99). It also parallels the love of mother and child, Mary and Jesus, and Christ and mankind, which further supports a Eucharistic, Christ-like reading of *Goblin Market*.

The combination of salvation and using the body as a vehicle to salvation, i.e. the erotic body, parallels the verbal-visual aesthetic Rossetti uses throughout the poem. Just as the act of eating and drinking the body of Christ to right wrongs, Rossetti uses theological and erotic imagery to confuse the senses—much like nature does—and in the end puts the world of Lizzie and Laura back to rights through patriarchal and deeply Christian-rooted means. The raw and vivid imagination throughout the poem explodes on paper, and on canvas, only to conclude in blissful simplicity.

Chapter Three

Sensuous Words and Suggestive Imagery: Reading *Goblin Market* in a Sexual Economy

In a post-Freudian world, reading *Goblin Market* as a sexual allegory with its sensuous words and suggestive imagery, “coupled with its representation of gender relations as a predatory politics between grotesque, aggressive males and innocent, suffering females”, makes it easy to see phallic symbols and female homosexuality hidden—or not so hidden—within the lines of Rossetti’s poem (Kooistra, *Illustration* 241). Rossetti’s Victorian England, however, was less open to the idea of sex displayed in public. Sexual overtures in art and literature had to be subtle and privately discussed—though it has been documented there was an underground culture of men indulging in female homoerotic smut films (Duffy 289)—hence any subtleties on Rossetti’s part were not only possible but expected by a consumer market that secretly craved an open invitation to read and see sex. In a market economy, sex sells—something the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have substantiated—and within that type of economy, consumerism and trade flourish. Thus, the value of Lizzie’s silver penny is significantly less than Laura’s golden curl in the world of *Goblin Market*.

Rossetti’s thinly veiled reference “to homosexual relationships between women ... ends with an apparent restoration of a patriarchal order through procreation” (Welter 138). *Goblin Market* reflects the dynamic of homosexual female relationships within a society that favored patriarchal dominance. The poem’s conclusion reaffirms male authority through the resulting marriages of Laura and Lizzie to unidentified men (139). Women were objects to be traded and bartered for or given over for opportunity, which left women helpless as they were passed between one man after the other. In the most traditional sense, women were passed from father or brother to husband, but if women were not in a more traditional setting, they were passed between each paying customer.

The same timeline of events established in chapter two must also be established here: Laura's temptation to try the goblin men's fruits; her fall from innocence when she pays for the fruit with a golden lock of her hair; and her redemption through the acts of Lizzie. Laura's temptation begins near the river by the glen where the mysterious goblin men can be heard calling out to "[c]ome buy" (l. 3) their wares every day at dusk. At first *Laura* cautions against the goblins, telling Lizzie, "We must not look at goblin men" (l. 42). Yet while she says this, Laura contradictorily "[p]rick[s] up her golden head" (l. 41) to catch a glimpse. *Lizzie* then warns Laura against looking at the goblins, and proceeds to cover her eyes and plug her ears, and runs away, leaving Laura behind, unaware that she is not following (ll. 50, 67-8).

Curious Laura chose to linger
 Wondering at each merchant man.

 Laura stretched her gleaming neck
 Like a rush-imbedded swan,
 Like a lily from the beck,
 Like a moonlit poplar branch,
 Like a vessel at the launch
 When its last restraint is gone. (ll. 69-70, 81, 83-6)

Heidi Scott argues that Rossetti invariably describes her female characters—Laura, Lizzie, and Jeanie—as plant-like images—"a lily", a "poplar branch"—while the male characters—the goblins—are described as animals—a cat, rat, snail, parrot, ratel, and wombat (219; ll. 71-6, 112). Though Rossetti describes Laura's neck as swan-like, the graceful, un-beastly animal is hidden amongst the rushes making her seem more plant-like than animal. The goblin animal men are later described as making animalistic sounds such as grunting, hissing, snarling, mewling, and barking (ll. 393, 402).

Each beast-like goblin shares a cohesive goal: "to corrupt young *flowers* of girls who may be beguiled by their gaudy perishables" (Scott 219-220, emphasis mine). These "gaudy perishables" were considered to be something of "a luxury, characterized by sweetness and

even eroticism” (Tucker 29). Since fruit was often imported and expensive, it made the commodities more desirable to tongue and eye. In fact, the goblins later tell Lizzie that she must eat the fruit there with them or else the goods will turn bad and be no good to her. The fruits’ ripeness is both precious and precarious.

In order to pay for the fruit, Laura uses a lock of her golden hair at the suggestion of the goblins. The male goblin protagonists are seen here “as opportunists willing to take advantage of a woman’s innocent youth and gullibility” (D’Amico 75). Laura has subjected herself to the patriarchal structure of society by giving in to the goblin men’s demands. By using a piece of her hair in place of coin, Laura has turned herself into a commodity to be sold (Welter 140). Laura’s hair is the extent of her wealth, the only currency she has, and in giving a piece of it to the goblin men she surrenders her virginity. When she “impulsively” buys the fruit, Laura spends her “virtue” on something that will only last for a moment “and therefore has harmed her reputation” (Gitter 946). Her brief sexual encounter lasts no longer than the fruit she eats.

The Victorians had an obsession with women’s hair in both literature and art, and it was a commodity highly sought after, particularly golden hair. Blonde hair was not only a popular subject for art and “ballads and fairy tales,” but it was connected to female mysteriousness and sexuality, and was considered to be “a symbol of something precious and powerful or sacred” (Gitter 936). When Laura gives up her golden lock she not only gives up her virginity, but a sacred feminine power, which may have been her only defense against the goblins. Maureen Duffy’s take on the transaction of Laura’s golden curl for fruit takes a turn towards extremity when she argues Laura’s golden lock actually refers to pubic hair, and Laura’s sucking of the fruit is actually “a powerful masturbatory fantasy of feeding at the breast” (290). In a strictly commercial sense, the golden lock of hair would have been worth a fair amount in a trade economy, perhaps more so than “copper” or “silver” (ll. 118-9) based

on the demand for hair in the Victorian marketplace. A tradesman could possibly sell or exchange a lock of hair at a higher rate, while a penny is only worth a penny.

Once Laura sells her golden innocence she withers away, turns gray, and begins to die, just like Jeanie before her. The connection made between pre-martial sex and the consequences are reflected in Jeanie's untimely death just before her wedding day and Laura's rapid deterioration (Jones 96). Jeanie's actions label her as a "fallen" woman, and "an equation is thus set up between the indulgence of female sexual desire and sickness unto death" (Harrison 416). Laura's experience was similar to Jeanie's in that once she had tasted the goblin fruits her sexual desire was awakened and it now cannot be slaked (Jones 96). It is only once Lizzie has saved Laura that her golden tresses are restored and thereby her innocence. Now she can marry and have children without the cloud of shame hanging over her head (Gitter 946).

Once she returns home from her "feast," Laura listens to Lizzie's chastisements but simply brushes them off, eager to detail her experience in the glen:

"I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
.....
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold" (l. 165-6, 173-7).

The next day Laura cannot hear the goblin men's cry, nor can she the day after, or the day after that. The terrible foreshadowing of Jeanie's health becomes a realization as Laura becomes "listless" (l. 297), refuses to eat, begins to sicken, and her once luscious golden hair turns limp and grey. Lizzie in turn decides to face the goblin men alone to try and buy some fruit, hoping that will restore her sister to health.

The experiences of the two sisters are very different. While Laura sought the fruit for her own pleasure, Lizzie seeks it out for unselfish reasons, and hence what was formally

“sensuous pleasure [is] degenerated into aggressive male sexuality” (Coelsch-Foisner 29).

Lizzie’s experience with the goblins is sexually violent, often read as an “attempted” rape—though whether or not it is a successful rape is arguable. Lizzie attempts to pay for the goblin fruit with her worthless silver penny, and the goblins try to coax her into staying and feasting with them. They do not want money; instead they want to barter to gain something that is priceless: her virginity. When Lizzie steadfastly refuses to partake of the fruit, the goblin men become vicious:

[T]he goblins cuffed and caught her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word (ll. 424-30).

There is no evidence that Lizzie was actually raped, only that she is badly beaten. Yet the language suggests rape when coupled with vivid illustrations (See Figures 8 and 10, ch. 4). However, Lizzie is not deterred by the goblins’ aggressive sexuality. All while the goblins smash fruit in her face, the juice and syrups “lodged in dimples of her chin, / And streaked her neck” (ll. 435-6), giving Lizzie the ability to save her sister even without the whole fruits in hand. When Lizzie returns home with her prize, she tells Laura to ignore the bruises that blossom on her skin and instead encourages Laura to make a feast of her body:

“Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits just for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me” (ll. 467-72).

This erotically charged language has produced some extremely vivid artistic depictions and excited scholarly criticism. By looking at the words, reading them and seeing them in a sexual context, it is easy to pick out several sexual innuendos and symbols. First off, “suck my juices” could either refer to breast milk or feminine discharge, as is depicted in Craft’s

image (See Figure 9, ch. 4). However, since the “[g]oblin pulp and goblin dew” are “squeezed from goblin fruits”, one immediately associates the “pulp and dew” with sperm. Again, Craft interprets this in her painting where a goblin is shown squeezing a penis-looking fruit toward Lizzie with a white fluid ejecting from the tip (See Figure 8, ch. 4).

The exchange of fruit juice from Lizzie’s body to Laura’s mouth is evidence of female homoeroticism. After Laura has sucked the juices off her sister’s skin she “falls to the floor in a kind of orgasm delineated by a series of phallic [symbols]” (Jones 98). Namely: “a wind-uprooted tree” and “a foam-topped waterspout” (ll. 517, 519). “Is it death or is it life?” (l. 523) the narrator asks after Laura has fallen. Lizzie sits beside Laura, watching and waiting, checking for the rise and fall of her sister’s chest. Finally, the next morning, Laura wakes, regenerated:

And new buds with new day
 Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
 Laura awoke as from a dream,
 Laughed in the old innocent way,

 Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey (ll. 534-8, 540).

The language of the lines above speaks of new birth and virginity, the answer to the narrator’s question. The “new buds with new day” and the opening of “cup-like lilies” are symbolic of a fresh start, as well as a young girl budding into physical maturity. Also, the cup-like lily opens as if to receive the thing that deflowers a female.

Now that Laura’s hair has been restored to its original splendor, “the spiritual value of gold hair can be redeemed ... if the girl saves her hair for the right bridegroom, if she spends it in a truly profitable marriage, her gold is proved to be true and lasting” (Gitter 947). This proves true in the final scene of the poem. The two sisters have married and reproduced—Laura gathers the “little ones” (l. 548) around her to hear a story—yet men are absent from the scene displaying the girls’ offspring. It is through “isolation and autonomy” that Lizzie

and Laura and their children have survived (Scott 221). When the girls did interact with men, they were harmed; hence, the significance of the husbands' absence.

Much of *Goblin Market*'s erotic imagery can be seen in these passages, yet there is evidence of sexuality beyond these scenes, buried amongst the fruit. Much like the phallic images Jones points to of trees and reeds, the goblin men of *Goblin Market* carry baskets and plates of fruits fraught with sexual undertones and metaphors for the female anatomy. In the seventh line of the poem, the fifth kind of fruit to be mentioned by the goblins is "[p]lump unpecked cherries". Twentieth century slang adopted the term "cherry" as a substitute for the hymn when discussing female virginity ("cherry," def. 4). Once a female has had her first sexual experience her cherry is "popped." The fact that the cherries in the poem remain "unpecked", or unpicked, could mean one of two things: first, that the possessor of the unpicked cheery still possesses her virginity; or second, the cherry—the female—remains unpicked—unmarried—because she is unwanted.

The melon, the sixth fruit listed by the goblin men, is symbolic of breasts. A melon is defined as having "sweet pulpy flesh" ("melon," def. 1); similar to the feel of a breast, and a melon's syrupy juice is often described as milk-like. In Craft's illustration of Lizzie, one of the goblins carries a platter of breasts, similar to the tray of round fruit at Lizzie's feet in Rackham's depiction, and Dante Gabriel's "Buy from us with a golden curl" image. The seventh fruit listed is a bunch of "[b]loom-down-cheeked peaches" (l. 9). Peaches are described as having "juicy yellow flesh and downy pinkish-yellow skin" and the term is often used in describing a level of attractiveness associated with one's "peaches and cream" complexion ("peach," def. 1; "peaches and cream"). Both Lizzie and Laura are portrayed with such a complexion in many of *Goblin Market*'s illustrations. Clearly the goblins' peaches refer to feminine beauty, and since the peach is listed after the fruits listed above, a fruit, a thing of beauty, is a sexualized object to be judged.

The “[p]omegranates full and fine” (l. 21) that the goblins offer are at once exotic and sensual. Hailing from North Africa and Asia, the pomegranate contains fleshy seeds, which one sucks on—an action Laura engages in when eating the fruits—to extract the flesh (“pomegranate,” def. 1). Pomegranates have been used in artwork to represent the vagina, as is seen in Kinuko Craft’s painting of “White and golden Lizzie stood.” Pomegranates are also found in Dante Gabriel’s drawing of Laura. Prominently displayed alone on a platter, the fruit is split open slightly to reveal the fleshy seed within.

The pear is listed shortly after the “full and fine” pomegranate, and is described as “rare” (l. 23). This rareness may refer to the fruit’s shape, as the shape of a pear is often used to describe a female’s body shape: “having hips that are disproportionately wide in relation to the upper part of the body” (“pear,” def. 1; “pear-shaped”). Having wide hips allows a woman to carry and birth children easier. Wide hips were once a desirable quality to men who were hunting through the marriage market hoping to select a suitable bride. Dante Gabriel’s Lizzie and Laura fit this description, and there is also a scattering of pears in Raskin’s image of child-like Laura partaking in an apple.

Other exotic and plump fruits are listed such as dates, “[c]itrons from the south” (l. 29), pineapples, and figs, which shows the diversity of their wares and the strangeness too, since they are “[a]ll ripe together / In summer weather” (l. 15-6). This is directly linked to the idea that all these fruits in perfect ripeness in the same season are a warning of danger to the girls who “peep at goblin men” (l. 49) and give in to temptation, sacrificing their virtue for something as dark and fleeting as the night.

The sensuous language of *Goblin Market* is evident at every point throughout the poem. Examination of these words and images created by Rossetti leads to an erotically charged reading. The actions of the goblins and/or Lizzie and Laura are all graphically described with verbs and adjectives depicting violence and sensuality: Laura sucks, kisses,

and loves Lizzie; the goblins claw and tear at Lizzie; Laura sucks the goblin fruit down to the rinds and throws them away like a one-time lover—much like the goblins do with the women they have lured and corrupted. Rossetti's powerful imagery is used as a stepping-stone for artists as they begin to depict and reveal *Goblin Market* to the world through the strokes of a paintbrush.

Chapter Four

The Verbal-Visual Aesthetic: *Goblin Market*'s Words and Imagery Make Art

Goblin Market is a leading example of the Pre-Raphaelite method of combining image and word, and it was through the mass-produced book that Christina Rossetti achieved this method of the verbal-visual aesthetic. *Goblin Market* was a Pre-Raphaelite collaboration on the part of Christina Rossetti—wordsmith—and her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti—artist. “*Goblin Market* is ... considered one of her most characteristically Pre-Raphaelite works because of the pictorial richness of its sensuous details. Certainly it has inspired more visual responses than any other of her works” (Kooistra, “Christina Rossetti” 173-4). *Goblin Market* has inspired illustrators and artists for the past 150 years, and each period of *Goblin Market*'s production and reproduction has elicited varying degrees of sensuous art to accompany Rossetti's most famous text.

The first illustrations to accompany *Goblin Market* were two images designed by Dante Gabriel, Pre-Raphaelite artist extraordinaire. Both Rossettis believed that illustrations were meant “‘to light up’ or ‘illuminate’ a text rather than ‘to reflect’” a text, as “illustrate” means in contemporary language. For them, text and art should reflect one another; the illustration should be read alongside the text to help read the symbolism within both text and image. For the frontispiece and title page of *Goblin Market* the two Rossettis worked together to bring about collaborative pieces for Christina's debut book of poems. However, both the frontispiece and title page were placed at a distance from the poem, which “meant that they were also inevitably divorced from the poetry and in danger of seeming ... too much like free-standing works.” To counteract this separateness, Dante Gabriel pulled lines from the poem to title his works, thus drawing the reader into the poem before the first lines are read (Kooistra, *Illustration* 67). For the frontispiece of *Goblin Market*, Dante Gabriel chose to depict the crucial moment of Laura's fall into temptation: “Buy from us with a golden curl” (l.

125). For the title page, he selected the line “Golden head by golden head” (l. 184) to display the poem’s main characters. Thus, through both selections and the naming of Dante Gabriel’s drawing with lines from Christina’s poem, “[t]he relationship between image and text is ... complementary and dialogic” (Kooistra, *Illustration* 67-8).

When the first edition of *Goblin Market and Other Poems* was released it was ostensibly a book of poems for adults. However, the general Victorian public questioned the motives of *Goblin Market*. Was the poem “a moral ‘allegory against the pleasures of sinful love’ or an immoral narrative extolling the delights of the flesh [?]” (Kooistra, “Modern Markets” 252). The first part of the question reflects the obvious Tractarian views underlying the poem, and the second suggests Pre-Raphaelite influences. Kooistra believes that these two interpretations were in direct relation to the images provided by Dante Gabriel for the poem (252). Because Dante Gabriel’s illustrations are placed before the poem, instead of in sync with the passages they refer to, they “mediate the reading experience” (Kooistra, “Christina Rossetti” 176). The reader explicitly has an idea about the poem in their minds before they even begin reading.



Figure 1

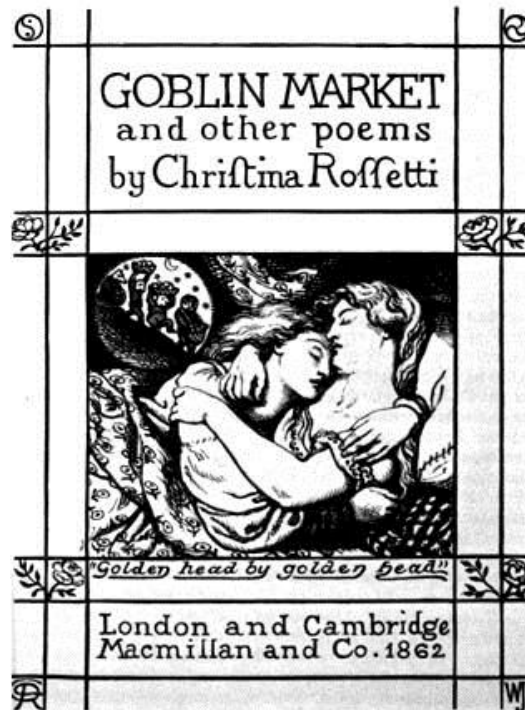


Figure 2

Above is the frontispiece (Figure 1) and title page (Figure 2) designed by Dante Gabriel for *Goblin Market*. “Buy from us with a golden curl” (Figure 1) depicts Laura clipping her “precious golden lock” (l. 126), while a dark headed Lizzie—not golden headed—is seen in the background on a hill above the glen, looking back as her sister hands over her virtue. There is something wrong here, as we are told in the poem that Lizzie shuts her eyes, plugs up her ears, and runs away (ll. 50, 6-8). She is unaware Laura has stayed behind, let alone that she has succumbed to temptation. In the foreground, Laura is sitting on her knees surrounded by animal-faced, human-handed goblin men holding “a basket,” “a plate,” “a golden dish / Of many pounds weight” (ll. 56-9) as she clips a lock of her long, wavy golden hair. One of the goblins, a mouse situated above Laura’s head, watches Lizzie as she goes and seems to be beckoning her to come back and join them. Maureen Duffy, in *The Erotic World of Fairy*, points to the nineteenth century artist Fuseli who specialized in fairy painting. Fuseli introduced the “grotesquerie of the erotic”, and also presented goblins with animal-like qualities (287-8). It is possible that Dante Gabriel was aware of Fuseli’s

animal goblins when he drew his own. Lastly, looking at Laura, one cannot help but see the shapeliness not of a woman, but of a man. “Dante Gabriel’s frontispiece shows a full-throated lady of the type he was later to make famous” (Stuart 52). This “full-throated lady” appears to have an Adam’s apple more so than a “full” throat.

Figure 2 depicts the scene after Laura has returned home from the glen satiated, and the sisters sleep “[g]olden head by golden head” (l. 185). This image “substitutes sororal difference with feminine sameness, thereby displacing the moral story with sexual fantasy.... [T]he sisters become visual twins, Pre-Raphaelite beauty mirrored and doubled” (Kooistra, “Modern Markets” 253). While it is true that both sisters now appear to have golden hair and “full-throated” necks, Laura still appears as the dominant figure, with her arms encircled around Lizzie, whose features are decidedly less masculine than Laura’s, who has a square jaw, broad nose, and meaty looking arms. Lizzie is covered from neck to wrist in a demure sleeping gown, while Laura wears a gown loosely fitted and short-sleeved, revealing more skin than Lizzie. This shows that Laura is now a woman of loose morals. She has thrown away her virtue and is now a sinner.



Figure 3

Figure 3 is a full-page illustration of “White and Golden Lizzie Stood” drawn by Laurence Housman for his 1893 edition of *Goblin Market*. Housman’s illustrations heavily reflect Dante Gabriel’s original designs with animal-like goblins that have human hands, and also draw on the same sexualized theme Dante Gabriel picked up on in his renditions (Kooistra, “Modern Markets” 253). This spread also separates word and image just as Dante Gabriel’s pieces did. Housman’s illustration “draws on religious typology to interpret the meaning of Lizzie’s encounter with the goblins” (Kooistra, *Illustration* 87). Lizzie looks as if she is bending in an impossible way, with her stiff lower body—feet tight together, like her lips, rooting her firmly to the spot—and her careened upper body. The goblins in Housman’s scene are not smaller than the girls, as in Dante Gabriel’s depiction of the goblins, but they stand at about half the girls’ height, and are large enough that a few actually take hold of Lizzie. The grotesquely half-human, half-animal goblins swarm her, making it difficult to tell where Lizzie ends and they begin. All the while Lizzie looks as if she is dazed and confused. This relates to Grass’s argument that the overwhelming number of fruits and creatures listed in the poem disturb the senses and distract the girls from making sound decisions. Another interpretation of the scene shows that Housman has drawn on the image of Christ on the Cross. Lizzie’s arms are spread out to the sides, pulled back towards the tree, and her legs and feet are clasped together as if tied. In this pose, “Lizzie becomes a suffering female Christ who redeems the sinful Eve” (Kooistra, *Illustration* 89-90). This interpretation links to the Eucharistic/Christ-like allegory from chapter two.

Leaving the nineteenth century illustrations and publication of *Goblin Market* for an adult audience, we turn to the twentieth century where children’s books and adult erotic fantasy brought to life Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* in a swirl of color, innocence, sexual aggression, and even outright pornographic images, suited to specifically targeted

audiences. Within the twentieth century, *Goblin Market* has been published, marketed, and sold to children, scholars, and adult collectors. The changes within the text are not the key element to decipher the divisions between a children's book of *Goblin Market* or an adult comic, but the illustrations that adorn the pages of these editions. The telltale difference between the targeted audiences of adults and children are explicitly sexual drawings.

Traditionally, the issue of sex is a prohibited topic of conversation for children. While the poem was originally written for adults, it crossed over into young adult readership and it was not until vividly sexual illustrations accompanied the poem that the line between the two was redefined. The sexual subtext of *Goblin Market* "has become the main theme in certain modern publications of the poem directed specifically at a mature audience. As is the case in marketing of the poem for the child reader, illustrations play a determining role in establishing the targeted adult audience" (Kooistra, "Modern Markets" 249-51).



Figure 4



Figure 5

Arthur Rackham's 1933 gift book is perhaps the most famous illustrated version of *Goblin Market*. While Rackham's gift book fits into the category of children's literature with its colorful and full-bodied illustrations, the intended audience included adult collectors. A total of 410 collector's editions were published, the cover and binding stamped in gold, and each signed by Rackham. The subsequent printed books were simpler and less pricy, intended for children (Kooistra, *Illustration* 208). When looking at the drawing of "White and golden Lizzie stood" (Figure 5), one can see clearly this picture was made for a mature audience compared to "She clipped a precious golden lock" (Figure 4), which is the picture of child innocence.

The frontispiece for Rackham's *Goblin Market* entitled "She clipped a precious golden lock" (l. 126) turns away from the traditional frontispiece title "Buy from us with a golden curl" (l. 125). Though each depicts the same scene, Rackham's title for his

frontispiece is a different line from the poem than Dante Gabriel's choice. Rackham's frontispiece would lead a reader to believe that the book is in fact a children's fairy story, riddled with colorful fruits and an innocent-looking girl of "indeterminate age" (Tucker 118). This is the first time we see the goblin men taking shapes that are related more closely to the traditional image of a goblin rather than animals, though Rackham does retain some of the animal faces described by Rossetti. For the most part, the coloring of the woods, the goblins, and even Laura are neutral, while the fruits look vibrant and luscious. Most of the goblins are grinning mischievously, closely resembling the goblins of European tradition that Carol Rose describes in her *Encyclopedia of the Little People*: Goblins are "grotesque, diminutive, and generally malicious" (128-9).

"White and golden Lizzie stood" presents a sharp contrast to the convincingly innocent "She clipped a precious golden lock." This image of Lizzie has provoked many critics and other artists into commentary with its subtle hints at physical abuse and rape. The goblins pull and tug at Lizzie's clothes, exposing a significant amount of skin—this much skin has not been seen since Dante Gabriel's "Golden head by golden head"—one goblin attempts to bite her shoulder, another pulls her hair. In earnest, Lizzie turns her head away from the goblin fruits exposing her long, swan-like neck. Lizzie has a more distinct female figure—a tiny waist and an obvious bust—than the image of Laura, which portrays a younger girl, perhaps just at the precipice of puberty. This innocent Laura looks as if she does not know any better than to trust the goblins, while the wiser, older Lizzie knows exactly the goblins' motives. Lizzie is truly "white and golden," resplendent in her white dress and her flowing, dark-golden mane. The fruits scattered on the ground and in baskets around her are colorful and distinct, and most of the goblin men and women blend into the forest. Women? But there are no female goblins in *Goblin Market*. This is true, there are no female goblins in Rossetti's poem, but there is a solitary female goblin in Rackham's image, on the far right,

almost in line with Lizzie's skirts. The goblin woman wears a headscarf and a shawl, and she follows a male goblin, dressed in an overcoat and cap, holding on to his arm. Why would Rackham include a goblin woman when the poem speaks only of goblin *men*? It is unclear. Perhaps Rackham was taking from earlier fairytale paintings he had produced with witches and goblins, as described by Hamilton, and simply thought nothing of it. Surprisingly, another illustrator picked up on this female goblin, for she includes at least one in her edited version of *Goblin Market* for a truly child-specific audience.



Figure 6

Ellen Raskin acted as editor and illustrator for a 1970 edition of *Goblin Market*. The target audience was children and the pictures would certainly appeal to a child of the 1970s. Raskin's images of two young girls, presumably on the brink of puberty, like Rackham's Laura, are surrounded by colorful goblins dressed in fairytale clothing of a time long since passed, and colorful fruits of red, orange, yellow, and purple, all in the forefront of a non-descript swirling background. Figure 6 is an image of Laura eating the goblin fruit after having already paid for it with a golden curl. Two goblins, one a man, the other an animal with a tail, inspect their golden prize. Meanwhile, Laura devours an apple. The poem does not specify which fruit she eats—"Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red" ... "Fruits which

that unknown orchard bore” (ll. 128, 135)—yet Raskin has chosen to show Laura eating the same fruit that caused Eve to fall from grace, highlighting a religious reading of the poem.

Behind Laura’s head, drawn smaller to show she is some distance off, is a goblin woman. She wears a yellow hat and dress, both adorned with a bow, and light-colored curls swim about her shoulders. This goblin woman looks like a grandmother-type figure, which is very different from Rackham’s frightening, skeletal-looking goblin woman.



Figure 7

Raskin’s Lizzie (Figure 7) is pitted against the same unassuming goblins as Laura, but they pull at her hair and dress—like Rackham’s Lizzie—and climb up her skirts and hang on her arms. The backdrop of this image is again the undecipherable swirling grey, which makes the fruit orbs glow brightly in the forefront. This Lizzie is neither white nor golden. Her hair is brown and her dress is yellow, and she stands against the goblins with arms stretched out as if to ward off the creatures. This is the first time that Lizzie’s hair is dark—unless we count the inexplicable dark haired Lizzie in Dante Gabriel’s frontispiece—and not a reflection of her sister. This could be Raskin’s way of separating the morally good sister from the morally bad sister, which is harder to do visually. With Rossetti’s words it is easier to decipher the good from the bad, the saint and the sinner, Mary and Eve (Ready 170).



Figure 8

In 1973, *Playboy* issued their adaptation of *Goblin Market*. Recall *Playboy* promoted *Goblin Market* as a children's fairytale in order to make the accompanying illustrations by Kinuko Craft seem more erotic to the point of female homosexual pornography (Kooistra, "Cross-Audience" 194). "To ensure that the sexual implications of Rossetti's imagery are not missed, Kinuko Craft provides sexually detailed illustrations that portray Laura's encounter with the goblins as a pleasurable orgy; the attack on Lizzie as a gang rape; and the final reunion of the sisters as idyllic lesbian love far from the world of men" (Kooistra, *Illustration* 242). Craft's "White and golden Lizzie stood" (Figure 8) is obviously modeled after Rackham's version; however, all the animal-like creatures are distinctly male, reflecting Rossetti and Housman's drawings. Lizzie clutches to a white garment, or what's left of it, while her golden, wavy hair streams out behind her, her head turned away from the onslaught. Baskets and platters of would-be fruit surround Lizzie. Some vessels are overflowing with vagina-looking orbs in place of pomegranates, while others contain breasts, nipple-side up, in place of "melons icy-cold" (l. 175). Near Lizzie's feet a ripe watermelon is cracked open to reveal bright red flesh—another vagina reference. A bushel of penis-bananas on the right

hand side of the illustration lies in front of a rooster-goblin, or cock-goblin, shrugging his shoulders as if to say, “I don’t know why she’s not eating.” A donkey, or ass, stupidly squirts semen at Lizzie’s face—the “juices” needed for Laura’s recovery. One goblin man attempts to lick Lizzie’s bare foot, perhaps referring to the fetish some males have for women’s feet. Another goblin, just at Lizzie’s waist, raises a penis, pointing up, as if trying to penetrate her. Does this sexual act translate into rape for Craft? The next illustration would indicate, yes, it does.



Figure 9

Figure 9, “Eat me, drink me, love me / Laura make much of me” (Il. 471-2), shows Lizzie upon her return from the goblin glen. Craft has painted this scene outside, in nature, completely removing the sisters from hearth and home, giving this image a righteous feminist edge. In the most homoerotic image of *Goblin Market* yet, Laura “eats” and “drinks” from Lizzie’s vagina, indicating the goblins have indeed raped her and their juices are now inside her. Laura must “suck [Lizzie’s] juices” (l. 468) in order to obtain the antidote to the poison she has ingested. Laura has been drained of all life, but as she eats from Lizzie her beauty and young age are restored, and Lizzie now appears to be the one wasting away, being drained of life. Laura greedily takes from Lizzie as she spreads Lizzie’s legs widely apart, holding her

there as if a prisoner. For support, as Lizzie drifts away from reality, she grasps Laura's buttocks and grips the gauzy white fabric that is carelessly draped around the girls' naked forms.

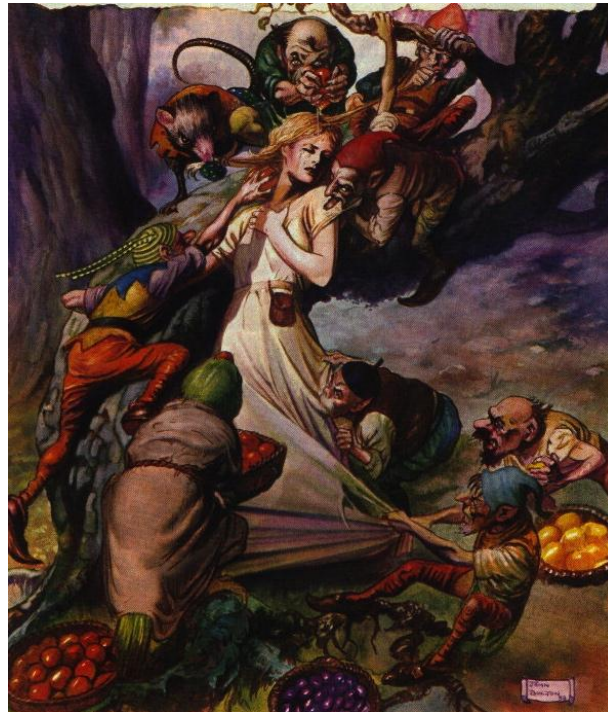


Figure 10

In 1984, John Bolton illustrated a comic book version of *Goblin Market* for an adult audience fascinated by the surrealism of a fantasy/fairy world. Just as Craft looked to Rackham's "Lizzie" illustration for inspiration, so too does Bolton: his "White and golden Lizzie stood" (Figure 10) clearly mirrors the 1933 watercolor. This acknowledgement of Rackham's children's version of *Goblin Market* only intensifies the conflict Kooistra cites as "tension between 'innocent' fairy tale and 'corrupt' fantasy" in contemporary *Goblin Market* readings (*Illustration* 244). Figure 10 does reflect the "white and golden" description of Lizzie, like Rackham's picture, since she is wearing a simple white dress and her golden tresses fall behind her neck. And like Housman's design, Lizzie is thrashed against a tree-trunk. At Lizzie's waist is a small coin purse, presumably where the "silver penny" (l. 324) is kept. The goblins are a combination of sinister looking men and animals, and are vibrantly illustrated. The little goblins that are more humanoid adorn stocking caps, similar to William

Allingham's elves dressed in little green jackets and red caps for his illustrations seen in *In Fairyland* (1870) (Duffy 292-3). They pull at Lizzie's hair, they tear the hem of her dress, and one even sticks its tongue out as if to lick her face. At Lizzie's feet are baskets of non-descript fruit, simple circles of color, which takes away from the richness of Rossetti's language in naming the various fruits the goblins hawk, but draws closer attention to the details of the goblins and Lizzie.



Figure 11

The twenty-first century has elicited more scholarly interpretations of *Goblin Market* than artistic ones, however, there have been a few. Jillian Tamaki's illustrations for The Folio Society's edition of *Goblin Market* (2003) have already been mentioned, as has the artwork and comic book for young adults by Rebecca Fox (2012). Figure 11, Fox's piece entitled "Kiss," was inspired by the same scene Craft depicted as a female homoerotic moment: "Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices ... Eat me, drink me, love me" (ll. 468, 471). The image of Laura sucking on Lizzie's bottom lip in "Kiss" has the same suggestive nuances as Craft's illustrations.

[O]ral images predominate in *Goblin Market* ... and there is something unsettling, even pathological, about desire.... The libido is transferred from a transgressive heterosexual relationship, treated in terms of a violent act [Lizzie's "rape"] ... onto the healing sisterly kiss, which carries both erotic-incestuous and liturgical connotations.... Laura's "lips began to scorch" (l. 493) as she sucks her sister's mouth smeared with the juice of the goblins' fruit. (Coelsch-Foisner 29)

Fox says on her website that she sees Lizzie and Laura as "representations of two sides of the Victorian feminine psyche, which still linger in our figuring of contemporary womanhood."

As in Raskin's children's book, and Bolton's comic book for adult collectors, Fox's Lizzie is dark headed and Laura light headed. While she offers no explanation for this, Fox has deleted the line "Golden head by golden head" from her comic book, perhaps to show the dichotomy of the sisters, rather than the similarity, just as Raskin did. Of her comic book edition, where she includes "Kiss," Fox explains that she chose that method of publication because it would appeal to a younger audience as they "emerge into adulthood which is a theme interwoven in the many meanings of this text." Fox sees *Goblin Market* as a poem wrought with images of "order and chaos", and through this order and chaos come gritty, sexual images of Laura and Lizzie surrounded by streaks of blood-red fruit juice, which look as if they have been made by human hands, on their breasts, hair, and face.

While the range of artistic interpretation is great, each illustration has the same underlying theme that Rossetti had in her original text: the collaboration of word and image, the verbal-visual aesthetic. It is seen in the adult comics of Bolton and Fox, who edited the poem to fit with the flow of their illustrations; it is apparent in Rackham's stand alone colored illustrations and the small black and white sketches of goblins and fruit that adorn each page; it is seen even in Craft's bold, outrageous, erotic paintings exhibited in *Playboy*; and it is

shown in the colorful, harmless style of Raskin's fairytale for children. The original black and white images of Rossetti and Housman set the bar for future artists and illustrators, to which each one has aspired.

Conclusion

Through a titillating combination of word and image, Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* has become one of the most studied, scholarly interpreted, and artistically portrayed poems of the nineteenth century. *Goblin Market* has transcended beyond the simple fairytale, a moral tale, and has moved outside the bounds of anything Christina could have possibly imagined. Depending on the fluctuating religious and social climate in the past 150 years, *Goblin Market* has either encouraged or discouraged literary interpretations revolving around religion, female sexuality, patriarchal society, feminism, or consumerism.

Because of *Goblin Market*'s deceptively childlike, singsong cadence, it is easy to forget the real world and lose oneself in a fairytale realm where precious fruits from every part of the globe are "ripe together" (l. 15) despite the "summer weather" (l. 16), and little animal-goblin men serve the fruit from a golden plate. However, this apparently pleasant fairy world is actually dark and dangerous, with goblin men lurking in the shadows waiting to take advantage of unsuspecting females. The varying line length and meter reflect the "destabilizing effect of the goblins' presence in the world of Laura and Lizzie" where the "wicked, quick-tempered goblins ... [haunt] [their] rustic paradise" (Coelsch-Foisner 28-9). The rustic paradise and the poisonous presence of goblin men can especially be seen in the illustrations of Rackham, Raskin, Craft, and Bolton, where darkness engulfs both the woods and the innocence of the girls. The emphasis on sisterhood at the end of the tale speaks of Rossetti's commitment to her own sister, Maria, whom Christina looked to for spiritual guidance throughout her life. Maria felt that there was an order and logic to religion, but Christina felt that "it was a matter for the heart and imagination" (Jones 81). The dichotomy between Christina and Maria mirror the dichotomy of Laura and Lizzie as sinner and savior, and in the end Laura and Christina are the dreamers, Lizzie and Maria the pragmatists.

Goblin Market has a rich publication history with its pendulum-like swing between adult and children's literary markets. However, the deciding factor of which category the poem belongs remains with complementary illustrations and that important relationship between word and image, which is founded on Rossetti's Pre-Raphaelite influences. Through the varying degrees of explicit sex in illustrations is revealed who should be reading what. In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, *Goblin Market*'s pendulum has swung back to an adult market in the twenty-first century in the form of erotic images, scholarly editions, and critical responses. The fact that the poem is beyond the understanding of a child, absent illustrative alteration, also serves as an argument that Rossetti's poem was written for an adult audience. Yet pop culture has redefined what it means to be a child and when a child becomes an adult. Today Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* could easily be placed in the "young adult" section of a bookstore, with a verbal-visual aesthetic appealing to those who are emotionally and physically somewhere between puberty and adulthood.

Christina Rossetti's most well known poem has survived over two and a half centuries of social and literary change. *Goblin Market* is at once a fairytale, a story of morality, and a religious and sexual allegory shrouded by mythical creatures in enchanted glens and enticing, exotic fruits. Today, this timeless piece still provides publishers a commercial product, scholars groundwork for further study, artists inspiration, and readers a broad array of intellectual provocation.

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